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I viaggi dell'anima. Società, Culture, Heritage e Turismo, Patron, Bologna, 2009

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The multiplication of the forms recently taken by tourism, is derived from the condition that the desire to travel depends mainly on the human psyche, influenced by taste, fashion, faith, illusion, self-determination and free will, as well as rational knowledge. Essentially, this consideration leads the tourism phenomenon to a boost that now more and more markedly feeds on culture in its many different meanings.

Cultural tourism practiced in religious spaces achieve a growing interest which combining the spiritual need to intellectual experience.

Indeed, the idea of binding sites and religious events to the tourism phenomenon is in itself very controversial: criticized by the religious authorities fearful of interference in the pure practice of pilgrimage; difficult to interpret as a mere tourism phenomenon.

The data, however, arouse our attention in what is objectively confirmed: the growth of tourism demand to this "product". A growing number of religious or natural sites become bearers of a cultural and spiritual message that modern man needs for its own internal growth, and in this way gives to himself a "holiday of the soul".

Hosting a cultural and religious tourism in socially and culturally sensitive settings is an important lever of regional development, but may reveal a dangerous operation for both the sanctity of places and local communities. Using the filters of the principles of sustainable tourism can be achieved regional development strategies, in which religious and spiritual tourism offer virtuous path of development.

The complexity of the topic is broad, but a scientific approach I offered in the volume edited by Fiorella Dallari, Anna Throne and Enza Zabbini "The journey of the soul. Society, Culture, Heritage and Tourism ", where the curators highlight positive aspects and difficulties of a phenomenon that shows stronger levers of local territorial development.

The introduction deals with the main key of the theme: "Religion and tourism, a difficult and problematic union", in which a preliminary approach may make appear that tourism and religion are totally divergent concepts but we come to the understanding of dimension of coexistence of these worlds.

Anna Trono and Fiorella Dallari first emphasize the role of tourism in the exploitation of "religious" Heritage, a tourism today "proposed (and confused) ... as an expression of cultural and quality tourism". In this sense, the tourist is oriented not only to the monuments and works of art known to most, but it is giving increasing importance to the myriad of churches,

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small churches and places of worship rooted in the territory. In this way there is a network system in which the strongest nodes connect to a dense network of sites of lesser value, but allows a more detailed level of local participation. For example just think about the territorial added value in all the destinations that have benefited from the ancient route to Santiago de Compostela, which produced a cultural renaissance in many Spanish towns.

The authors stress the difficulty in limiting the tourism and religious functions, to which they identify different degrees of the combination of the sacred-profane, and the difficulty of distinguishing religious tourism and pilgrimage, in short they point out the difficulties in dealing with a phenomenon that relies heavily on the needs of psyche and therefore influenced by a strong subjectivity. What the authors want to emphasize, however, is the importance of implications in territorial key: "functions and religious ceremonies are an important geographic factor for the tourism development in the area that welcomes them". The volume is divided into two parts: first, more general: "Religion, pilgrimage and tourism in a global perspective"; and a second in which case studies of European realities are presented: "Religion, Heritage and tourism in the territory".

In the first part there are contributions that try to deepen the meaning of the concept of religion or pilgrimage into a comprehensive framework of the principles of sustainability and social carrying capacity, as is the contribution of Eugenio Yunis and partly the Margaret Schiavetti essay. Fiorella Dallari together with Isabella Abbate confronts instead the need for detailed policy of coexistence between spiritual needs and behaviors of a mass tourism sometimes insensitive to this aspect, and as virtuous phenomena can be drawn from their dialogue.

Cosimo Notarstefano reminds us the challenges, including legal one, linked to the movement of migrants that tend to expand the complexity and the political and social transformations in place. The same is for the big changes inside the religious sphere, that Daniela Calanca shows through the analysis of the clothes "contaminated" by the changes of society.

In the second part is given way to case studies that tell us in detail about local tradition and events of different religious cultures in Europe and beyond.

Anna Trono provides an overview of the problems and prospects of tourism and religious Heritage in Southern Europe, focusing on a pilgrimage that is delineated with extraordinary journeys of the soul, in which modern pilgrims prefer to organize themselves the itinerary but following the ancient routes of their faith (Journeys of the soul, where "modern" pilgrims preferring to make their own traveling arrangements, but following the ancient itineraries of their faith). Scarpelli Lidia explains how difficult it is to extrapolate data related to religious tourism in a multi functional city like Rome. A key could be the analysis of the use of religious accommodation structures in tourism, but here there are many shadows that remain too. Kurt Klain rather the organizational difficulties and impacts related to exceptional events such as the visit of the Pope in Regensburg in September 2006. Vincent Zammit highlights the potential for religious tourism in Malta, crossroads of Mediterranean cultures bearer of different points of view. Albania is the case which propose Hanxhari Romeo, where the contamination after the bans, have strongly influenced the sense of spirituality. The point of view of Konstantina Bada is about the pilgrimage and religious tourism in Greece. Joao Paulo George offers a glimpse of Portuguese reality, while Silvia Grandi takes a look at the pilgrimage and religious tourism in Iran.

All from Puglia is the final with contributions from Francesca Ruppi, Marcella Nuzzo, Paola Benini, Katia Rizzello that develop on the Marian itineraries, Longobardorum sacred way, the religious festivals of Torrepaduli and the excursions to the sanctuary of Oria.